

# News & Views

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 @NSFAFANE

## The Next Five Years

Two years ago, under the direction of Council of Leaders, Simeon Roberts completed a member engagement survey. The results of this survey highlighted the concerns of members on a number of key issues. His follow up report entitled 'As It Was Heard' provided recommendations to NSFA on how to have a better connection and better serve our membership.

In response to this report, NSFA underwent a strategic planning process with Yvonne Thyssen-Post in 2018, to develop a strategy that would guide the organization over the next five years. The Steering Committee – made up of the three Executive Officers and three NSFA staff – met multiple times throughout 2018 and 2019 to review member and stakeholder feedback and determine the direction we would head until 2023. This included revamping our mission, vision, core functions and identifying key strategic priorities.

Thanks to consultations with membership, commodity groups, government and staff – the Steering Committee was able to gather the necessary input to create this plan.

In April, the draft of the strategic plan was presented to Council of Leaders, after discussion and a slight modification – it was approved.

Following are some of the key aspects from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

**Our Mission:** To influence and affect change for the continual success of agriculture in Nova Scotia

**Our Vision:** A prosperous and sustainable future for Nova Scotia farms and farmers

**Who we serve:** The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture serves NSFA members

After considering feedback from members in focus group sessions and at our 2018 AGM, our core functions are as follows:

- o Lobby/Policy/Advocacy
- o Member Engagement
- o Program and Service Delivery

To move the industry forward and help NSFA reach its vision and fulfill its mission, our strategic priorities are:

- o Connect and engage with members
- o Effectively influence government to affect change
- o To improve operational and governance structures of the organization

We are excited to implement this new strategic plan, with the goal of strengthening our relationships with members, improving our service to members, and increasing our collaboration with key industry stakeholders.

The next five years will be a process, and we're glad to have you along for the journey.

# Viewpoint

NSFA's strategic plan for 2019-2023 was officially completed and approved at April Council! This has been a lengthy process starting with the scoping exercise 2 years ago. Membership and stakeholders provided lots of feedback on the Federation and the gaps that you saw in your organization. Following that process, Council and Executive approved a process of review and development of a new strategic plan for NSFA.

There were many key issues that came forward as a part of this process, at the 2018 AGM we asked members to select the key issues they felt we needed to address. As a result of this process 7 overarching issues emerged; Public Trust, Internal Organization, Government Relations, Long Term Strategy for Agriculture, unique realities of Agriculture, Regulatory Burden and Information flow/Tech Transfer.

Council also approved a change and streamlining of our Vision: A prosperous future for Nova Scotia farms and farmers and our Mission: To influence and affect change for the continual success of Agriculture in Nova Scotia.

From the process we have also identified strategic priorities for the organization to help us achieve our Mission and Vision. All priorities are critical so they are not in order of priority, they are; connect and engage with members, effectively influence government to affect change and improve operational and governance structure.

Now the work begins in implementing the strategy. The process is already

underway with changes to our communication including this newsletter and the future development of member relations management tools, policy work with government and industry stakeholders, as well as a committee to look at the bylaws that we currently operate under.

Further into the weeds of the planning exercise and into the operational level we have also realigned staff duties to reflect this directional change, further into this newsletter you can read about some changes in staff responsibilities and work flows. As an Executive Committee and staff we are very excited about the positive changes that are underway in your Federation!

Another big change for us is our office move which took place on March 28th and 29th. We are up and running in our renovated space at 7 Atlantic Central Drive. Work to the building was completed on time and on budget so far, with a few things left to do such as a parking lot renovation along with some contouring and drainage. The meeting spaces are being well used and are intended for the use of the Federation, other tenants, as well as council affiliated organizations. There is approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of additional space available for rent on the other end of the building, this will provide income to help defray expenses once a tenant is secured. We look forward to welcoming you all to our new building, a house warming party will be in the works in the near future – stay tuned!

Comments?  
[hvisser@nsfa-fane.ca](mailto:hvisser@nsfa-fane.ca)



**Henry Vissers**

*Executive Director, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture*

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

***Is your internet slower than a herd of turtles?***

***Are two cans and a string a more reliable connection than your cellphone?***

If you answered yes to the above questions, we want to hear from you!

Members can complete the survey found online at [nsfa-fane.ca](http://nsfa-fane.ca), call the NSFA office to complete the survey over the phone or to receive a copy by mail.

We appreciate your feedback to address this important telecommunications infrastructure issue.

# New Roles and Responsibilities - NSFA Staff Take on New Portfolios

Recently, NSFA went through a strategic planning process, developing a new strategic plan that will guide the organization until 2023. Through the process it became apparent that NSFA was attempting to juggle multiple priorities and with the current structure, was out of balance, with many employees handling countless portfolios and projects.

As an organization, the Federation has been delivering programs and services for a number of years. For example, the Environmental Farm Plan has been operating within NSFA for 20 years, and the Federation has been closely linked to Farm Safety since its inception. There is now a push for new initiatives such as industry led public trust and labour services. In order to balance these programs with NSFA's core functions, adjustments were made to the internal structure.

This will afford the time for staff to focus on lobbying, advocating for policy change and managing issues. We are excited about the opportunity to best serve our members with these essential programs and ramp up our efforts to influence and affect positive change for Nova Scotia's agriculture industry.

With the goal of better serving membership, staff within the Federation have joined forces to focus on two core concepts – Operations and Outreach. The Operations Team, led by Associate Director; Wanda Hamilton will focus on the lobby, policy, and advocacy piece of the Federation – as well as government relations and issues management. The Outreach Team, led by Director of Outreach and Member Relations; Carolyn Van Den Heuvel – is made up of programs and

communications and will be focusing on program delivery, member relations, as well as marketing, and member communication.

## **Carolyn Van Den Heuvel – Director of Outreach and Member Relations**



Carolyn will be leading NSFA's Outreach team and programs including, Farm Safety, Environmental Farm Plan, Labour and Public Trust. In addition, she will also be managing NSFA communications, member relations, corporate members and the member benefits package. We are confident in her leadership abilities and are excited to see where she takes our Outreach team.

## **Maxine MacLean – Policy and Research Coordinator**



Maxine will be managing and monitoring industry trends, legislation, government policy, and research. As well as coordinating briefing notes, reports, papers, and adopted resolutions. Maxine will also be lending a hand in government relations and issues management strategies, and supporting communications from an operational/policy perspective. With Maxine's passion for policy we can't wait to see where she takes NSFA policy, lobby and advocacy efforts.

## **Katherine Doyle – Communications Coordinator**



Katherine will be leading NSFA communication efforts including: marketing, promotions, branding and media relations. In addition, she will be managing all websites, social media channels, organization messaging, media requests, event participation, our publications, and will continue to provide support for Nova Scotia Young Farmers. Katherine's passion for the industry and her public relations background is sure to be a great asset for the NSFA!



# Policy Corner and Industry Issues

## POLICY PROGRESS

### Labour Letter to the editor

In March a letter was submitted to the Chronicle Herald highlighting the positive impacts of Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP) and Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW). The letter was in response to a reported comment made by an activist at a rally in Halifax on adequate housing. This article can be found on page 5.

### Weed Advisory Committee



The NSDA Agricultural Weed Advisory Committee met with NSFA Staff to review proposed changes to the committee's processes. The Weed Advisory Act and associated regulations are slated for revision. Based on what was presented, a much-needed change is expected to streamline the processes for adding a plant to the Noxious Weed List. Also, more educational resources on how to manage or eliminate particular weeds are expected and increased capacity for inspectors to ensure noxious weeds don't get out of control.

### SPCA Meeting

SPCA officers met with NSFA staff in early April. The meeting was prompted by regular concerns from members with regards to animal welfare inspections for working dogs. NSFA

highlighted concerns around biosecurity and emphasized that working dogs are bred to do the job they do. The meeting had positive and collaborative actions identified for both SPCA and NSFA.



## INDUSTRY ISSUES

### Resolutions

#### Gypsum

Resolutions were discussed at NSFA's April meeting with Minister Colwell. Minister Colwell requested further information on gypsum which will be provided at the May meeting.

#### Rural Infrastructure

Rural infrastructure has been a priority area for NSFA over the years. As a reminder, NSFA has a survey available on our website or by calling into the office. The survey is designed to identify the highspeed and cellular service gaps throughout Nova Scotia as well as the impacts that the gap is having on farms.

As an update, Develop Nova Scotia (formerly the Waterfront Development Commission) held stakeholder meetings through Nova Scotia. Develop Nova Scotia has a broader mandate to help drive strategic economic development across Nova Scotia. Designing and managing the implementation strategy for the

internet for Nova Scotia is priority focus for Develop Nova Scotia. Develop Nova Scotia is looking to align themselves with various funding opportunities (federal, provincial and industry) as part of this strategy. Also during the stakeholder session, the question was asked about cellular service throughout the province. While the presenters from Develop NS indicated that cellular service is an important component of economic development, the provinces Emergency Management Office is taking the lead on the cellular service file.

There was concern around the governance of Develop Nova Scotia since the board was primarily from the Halifax region. Since the board mandate has changed, the board representation has changed to include representation from across the province for a wider perspective.

#### Local Procurement

The recent resolution on increasing the amount of locally procured goods is being explored. At a recent Atlantic Federations of Agriculture Meeting, the New Brunswick and Newfoundland federations indicated that both of their provinces are working towards improving their local procurement policies. The language around those procurement policies wasn't yet made public, but NSFA will continue to watch for progress and roadblocks that may impact our efforts.

#### Business Risk Management Update

Many members will recall the BRM Roundtable Update from the April News and Views. Since then, the other provinces held their own provincial consultations and the National Programs Advisory Committee

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## OPINION:

# Deep bonds with seasonal foreign farm workers

submitted to the Chronicle Herald by Victor Oulton, President

In 2014, about 9,200 people were employed in agriculture in Nova Scotia and 15 per cent were foreign workers. Despite that, 500 jobs were left unfilled, which led to \$15 million in lost sales due to labour shortages.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) is vital to addressing and filling the labour gap in the agriculture industry.

What may not be common knowledge are the rules and regulations that employers must follow under the program.

They're required to arrange and pay for the round-trip transportation of their seasonal workers — a portion of which is reimbursed by the workers as per their contract — as well as provide no-cost transportation to and from worksites/fields, shopping, etc. They must provide housing for their employees, and it's examined every 12 months by qualified inspectors.

The program includes carefully constructed rules protecting Canada's

seasonal workers — this includes formal, signed contracts that outline expectations and benefits for them.

Under the program, workers do not qualify for provincial health care, as their maximum stay is eight months. Health insurance is provided, but at the expense of the workers.

They are also informed to always be in possession of their personal documents: passports, contracts, SIN cards, etc. Any suggestion that an employer or farmer would take possession of these documents — which is illegal — is misinformed.

Workers have several very powerful advocates in their corner, who will intercede and/or speak for them regarding any matter they feel is necessary: their own liaison office, Service Canada, Canada Border Services Agency and the provincial labour standards division.

But one of the most significant parts of this program that is not often

highlighted is the bonds that form between the farmers and their staff. Any farmer you speak with will tell you how important these employees are to their operation, and how they've become part of their family. Employers often share meals with staff after work, and some even travel down to visit them in their home countries during the off season — meeting their families, helping out on their farms and even helping build onto their houses.

While Canadian taxpayers actually contribute zero dollars to the SAWP program, the income sent home by SAWP workers in Canada is 11 times what the Canadian government sends those same countries in foreign aid annually.

For seasonal agricultural workers, being away from family for months at a time is challenging. But knowing that the work they are doing here is helping to put their children through school and pay for their families' medical coverage back home makes the time apart worth it.

## Policy Corner and Industry Issues

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reviewed the findings of the provincial consultations. There was general consensus across Canada to include family labour, equipment leases and contract work as eligible expenses and look at commodity losses rather than whole farm losses. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture along with

the AgGrowth Coalition (a group of national commodity organizations focusing on changes to the BRM suite of programs) formulated positions and actions of what they would like to see come out of the BRM review. The group formulated positions on funding processes, the need for such

programming, need for robust changes to the programs, options for alternative programs and analysis to accompany the options, and a position on next steps.

## One Road. One Goal.

As farmers, you wouldn't be surprised to hear that you often cause some "frustrations" for commuters on the road, especially during your planting and cropping seasons. What is surprising, is the risks that motorists will take – rather than simply slowing down, enjoying the view, and waiting until it is safe to pass.

Research from the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association shows that motor vehicle collision fatality rates have been increasing an average of 2.8% each year.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia is prioritizing this issue in our road safety campaign "One Road". One Road is an educational campaign aiming to keep farmers, workers and commuters safe when farm vehicles are on roadways. While also ensuring that farmers/workers are following safe practices when using our provincial roads and highways.

Before heading back onto the roads for another busy season, here are some

best practices to keep in mind.

When it comes to general tractor safety you want to ensure the following:

*Make sure your tractor is equipped with proper safety guards and devices. Check equipment (e.g. hydraulics, tires, brakes, and lights) before leaving.*

*Tractors manufactured after 1974 must be equipped with a roll-over protective structure (ROPS) and a seatbelt, which must be worn at all times.*

*Lock tractor brakes together when traveling on the road.*

*Always travel on the road, never the shoulder. When safe, pull off the road and stop to allow vehicles to pass.*

*When towing implements, be sure to use proper hitching techniques with safety chains. All implements should be locked in the "travel" position when on public roads.*

*All loads must be properly secured.*

When travelling on roads there are requirements you must follow regarding warning lists and signage:

Slow moving vehicle signs must be on the back of the following:


 Farm tractors


 Trailers and equipment being towed by farm tractors

Vehicles and equipment displaying a

slow-moving vehicle sign must NOT travel faster than 40km/hr.

When traveling with wide equipment:

 Wider than 2.6m (8'6"), put fluorescent flags or flashing lights on the sides AND an amber warning light on the top of the farm vehicle.

 Wider than 4.3m (14'), use a pilot vehicle.

*Pilot vehicle cannot be towing anything and must have an over-dimensional sign*

*Ensure your due diligence – follow best practices and applicable laws.*

*Make sure your vehicle visible to oncoming traffic – lights, reflective tape, SMV signs.*


*Always use turn signals for a substantial time before turning.*

*When making turns, keep an eye out for passing vehicles.*

*Slow down substantially for hills and curves.*

*Be on the alert for soft shoulders, potholes and deep ruts, narrow bridges, loose gravel, bumps in the road.*

*Be aware of traffic in both directions.*

**Remember to be visible, be aware, be courteous, and most importantly – be safe.** 





# What to keep in mind: Labour Edition

Having employees on your farm means there are many regulations you must comply with under the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code, and for those hiring temporary foreign workers, the provisions set by the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP) and Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) programs. This article will touch on just two key elements of these requirements: partial hours and the importance of documentation.

## Partial Hours

Partial hours applies to those working for an hourly minimum wage. This means there is a requirement to round time up. Therefore, when an employee works over the hour but less than the half hour, they must be paid for hour and a half (e.g. 7hrs 16mins – 7hrs and 30mins). While working over

the half hour, it must be rounded to the nearest hour (e.g. 7hrs and 34mins – 8 hours).

## Documentation

One of the most important things to keep in mind is documentation and record keeping. Ensuring there is documents to backup any changes or decisions that are made. This is of particular importance to those hiring temporary foreign workers under federal programs. In Nova Scotia, it is the highest standard between the Labour Code and the worker contract that stands.

Reminder that if any of the following apply to you, you must have documentation confirming the employee agreed to these conditions:

- Day of rest: record the employee agreed to waive the day of rest

- Hours worked: record the employee agreed to work beyond the hours stated in their contract.

For more information on the [Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code](#) or to [speak with someone](#) call **toll free within NS: 1-888-315-0110**.

Recently, NSFA applied for Labour Sector funding in order to increase our support to members. We're excited to announce that we have received our funding agreement! This will allow us to bring on an advisor, solely dedicated to labour, which in turn will help us provide you with more tools and resources to support you as employers. Working to increase our advocacy and educational efforts to address labour shortages, labour gaps, skills training, labour legislation and more!

# Farm Technician Apprenticeship

The Farm Technician Apprenticeship Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is continuing its work towards a trade designation of Farm Technician. Sitting on the committee are, Chair Kimberly Stokdijk and members Denise Bekkers, Lauchie MacEachern, Gordon Jackson, Angus Ells, Matthew Harrison and Henry Vissers, with support from the staff of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. The TAC is currently working toward a presentation to the Apprenticeship board in November of this year.

The development of the Farm Tech Apprenticeship stems from a NSFA policy which identifies the lack of skilled labour as a critical issue for Nova Scotia farms. Once the Farm Technician trade is designated, farms will be able to enroll existing employees

that are interested in enhancing their skills.

Apprenticeship is a form of post-secondary education for both young and mature individuals who want to be certified to work in a skilled trade. It is a combination of on the job and technical training where skilled trades' professionals (certified journeypersons) pass on knowledge and skills to learners (apprentices).

Apprenticeships such as Farm Technician begins with an agreement between an apprentice and an employer. The apprentice, who would already be working for a farm, agrees to enter the apprenticeship program in exchange for supervised, on-the-job training and experience, and the opportunity to participate in the necessary technical training. In the workplace, apprentices are supervised by a certified

journeyperson who tracks both their hours and competence in the practical skills of the trade. A farmer can apply for and receive a certificate of competence that would allow them to take on the role normally filled by a journeyperson.

Technical training is offered in class and/or online and is administered and arranged by the agency. Upon completion of the apprenticeship program (including technical training, on-the-job hours and competency in workplace practical skills), apprentices are eligible to write the certification exam.

In addition, there are supports for employers, as well as financial supports that are available to assist individuals on their journey from apprentice to certified journeyperson.

# Reduce Soil Erosion by Understanding the factors that Cause it

submitted by Cory Roberts, EFP Coordinator

Our ability to maintain or improve the quality of Nova Scotia's agricultural soils will determine our capacity to sustainably produce healthy crops into the future. There are several ways in which soil quality can decline over time and soil erosion is a major one. Erosion is the loss of soil through the action of running water, wind, tillage or ice. In our wet maritime climate, pounding rain and running water are the primary causes of soil erosion. When erosion is first visible in a field, it has already reached an unsustainable level.

Soil erosion not only represents an economic cost to farmers in terms of reduced productive capacity, it can also represent a cost to the wider environment when eroded soil particles carrying nutrients, pesticides and microorganisms find their way into natural systems including watercourses and wetlands.

Soil specialists since the 1930's have attempted to better understand erosion by breaking it down into several component parts. The Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) which has been improved upon and revised over the years is a model that predicts erosion as the result of six factors. This article will briefly look at each of these factors and discuss opportunities to implement management changes to reduce erosion risk.



## Erosion = R K L S C P

where;

R	=	rainfall erosivity
K	=	soil erodibility
L	=	slope length
S	=	slope steepness
C	=	cover and management
P	=	erosion control practices

**R (rainfall erosivity)** This factor takes into account the total rainfall amount, the intensity of the rainfall and the distribution of rainfall across the season. In general, higher intensity rain events have more erosive power than low intensity rain events. Big rains have larger droplets which have more energy to dislodge soil particles and a larger volume of water to carry dislodged soil particles away. Whereas fine rains have smaller raindrops which land gently on the soil and have the ability to be absorbed more slowly over time. We can't control when the rain comes or how much falls, so we'll have to settle for management practices to protect the soil from the rain.

**K (soil erodibility)** This factor takes into account the natural properties of a soil that affect its vulnerability to erosion. The two main components of erodibility are the texture of the soil (sand, silt and clay content) and the ability of the soil to absorb water. Soils containing silts and very fine sands are most prone to erosion where soils with higher clay or coarse sand contents are less prone. The structure of a soil, or arrangement of particles within the soil (sometimes measured as density) affects the amount of pore space a soil has, and this in turn affects whether water will be

absorbed or run-off. As we know, water running over the surface of a soil has the capacity to erode. We can't control the texture of our soils in any practical way but we can improve soil structure by keeping organic matter levels high and reducing compaction. Reduce soil erodibility by applying manure or compost, planting forages and deep-rooted cover crops and by reducing tillage and traffic.

**L S (slope length and slope steepness)** The slope length and the steepness of the slope play a role in erosion. Imagine rolling a tire down a hill. The length and steepness of the hill will determine how much speed the tire gains. The erosive power of water is directly related to the speed at which it travels. Anything that can be done to slow the forward speed of water running down hill can reduce erosion. Several practices that can slow water down will be discussed in the erosion-control practices section.

**C (cover and management)** Soil erosion can most readily be controlled by managing vegetation, plant residues, and tillage. Various crop types provide differing levels of protection from soil erosion with perennial forages providing the most stability, small grains providing moderate stability and row crops being most prone to erosion. Nova Scotia is particularly well suited to growing forages and the benefits to soil health are many, so attempt to incorporate forages into all rotations.

Cover crops can protect the soil after crop harvest when the soil would otherwise be exposed. Look for windows of opportunity where the soil is exposed and where a cover crop



# Reduce Soil Erosion by Understanding the factors that Cause it

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could be incorporated into the rotation. For example, some farms are broadcasting annual ryegrass into a young silage corn crop to ensure soil coverage over the winter where traditionally the soil would be exposed. If a cover crop hasn't been established by November 1st, it is recommended that hay or straw mulching be implemented at a rate of 3.3 t/ha (1.5 t/ac), or on areas of the field prone to erosion, the mulch should be applied at a rate of 4.5 t/ha (2 t/ac). At these rates, the mulch will cover 85 to 100% of the soil surface respectively. It is also recommended that mulching be done across the slope to ensure that there are no wheel ruts up and down the slope that would allow water to collect and cause more severe erosion in the wheel tracks.

Reducing tillage to maximize the amount of residue left on the soil surface is also an important management strategy. The EFP office has a residue management kit that can be borrowed to measure the percentage soil cover.

**P (erosion-control practices)** There are several management practices that can be used to guide and slow the movement of water and thereby reduce erosion. Pages could be written about any of these practices, so if you are interested in additional information please refer to the resources listed below.

**Contour tillage:** is the practice of conducting field operations along the



*Unsustainable soil erosion*

contour of a field. This has the benefit of preventing downslope pathways for water to gain speed formed by wheel ruts, furrows, etc.

**Strip cropping:** The practice of growing crops that require different management in strips along the contours of a field. For example, strips of a row crop that would be more susceptible to erosion, alternated with strips of grass forage.

**Diversion terraces:** Are shallow grassed ditches, with a berm on the downhill side which are constructed across the slope to intercept surface water runoff. Terraces decrease the slope length and remove large flows of water safely from the field.

**Grassed waterways:** For areas where persistent erosion occurs, permanently grassed waterways can be used. The waterways should be shallow channels approximately 6 m wide by 30 cm deep formed into a saucer shape following the natural depressions in a field. They allow large volumes of runoff to flow downhill without causing erosion

Erosion is a complicated issue with many aspects contributing to the overall susceptibility of a given soil. Some aspects like soil type and slope

are outside of a farmers control. In today's world where climactic variability appears to be increasing and where rainfall events with larger volumes and higher intensities may increase, it is more important than ever to protect our soils using management practices that we do have control over.

## Resources

The environmental farm Plan has the following resources available to farmers:

- Factsheets:
  - EFP Factsheet - Soil Conservation Practices
  - Soil Conservation in Nova Scotia Factsheet
  - Annual ryegrass in silage corn research summary
- Cover crop decision tool <http://decision-tool.incovercrops.ca/>
- Estimate the amount of residue in your fields; borrow our Crop Residue Management Kit
- Want to know more about of your soils? Provincial soil maps are available for all counties: <http://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/publications/surveys/ns/index.html>

**Your Environmental Farm Plan helps you make environmentally conscious decisions everyday.  
Show them off to win an EFP ball cap!**

# EFP Projects CONTEST



Send a picture of an environmental improvement on your farm to  
[info@nsfa-fane.ca](mailto:info@nsfa-fane.ca) with EFP in the subject line!

\*Contest ends June 30, 2019. Winners will be drawn randomly. By submitting a photo, you consent to having the photo shared as deemed appropriate by EFP and NSFA. Please provide your name and mailing address in the e-mail.



**Environmental Farm Plans  
in Nova Scotia need to be  
updated every 5 years.**

Book your visit with our online tool  
or call us to check on your update.  
[www.nsfa-fane.ca/efp](http://www.nsfa-fane.ca/efp) | 1-902-893-2293



# Building Tomorrow

## *Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia*

On April 24th 2019 at New Ross Farm Museum Honorable Keith Colwell, Minister of Agriculture announced a \$751k funding package over three years for the Nova Scotia Christmas tree and greenery industry.

This funding will allow Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia ('CTCNS') to support the Christmas tree and greenery industry to execute activities outlined in its newly developed strategic plan. Working strategically and collaboratively we will achieve our three overarching objectives.

1. To increase profitability for Nova Scotian Christmas tree producers, 2. To increase the number of growers in the industry and the number of trees produced and 3. to increase the overall quality of our product.

Until recently, the Christmas tree industry had been evolving for nearly one hundred years with minimal research and development. This undertaking by CTCNS with the support of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture has the potential to generate substantial farming revenue for rural Nova Scotia.

... now for the backstory ...

When a delegation from CTCNS approached the Department of Agriculture for support developing our industry, the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Keith Colwell sent a very clear message that his department was willing to help CTCNS, thus the Christmas tree and greenery industry in Nova Scotia, but not without a completed "strategic plan". This plan was to very clearly and concisely identify the role of the CTCNS and the direction forward for the N.S Christmas tree and greenery industry.

This exercise was only possible because of guiding presence of well qualified, and patient, personnel from NSDA's Value Chain Development team. Looking back, it hardly seems possible, the process all began with our first meeting on March 23rd 2018 working on SWOT analysis (to determine our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats). I know many in the room wondered if there ever could be something that would resemble a positive outcome. With the assurance of agriculture staff, we struggled along until, I will use the expression "we got our feet squarely on the ground" and things seemed to start to fall in place.

***Together, we established Council's vision and mission.***

The vision of the CTCNS is to be a truly sustainable industry for the benefit of Nova Scotians, with a focus on quality, continued growth and collaboration. Through improved efficiencies and innovation, the industry will double in size and quadruple in value by providing quality products that respond to changing customer demands in all present and future markets.

The mission of the CTCNS is to support the growth, improve and increase profitability of the Nova Scotia Christmas Tree and greenery industry and ultimately its future and sustainability. "Thrive and Prosper"

With the SWOT analysis behind us we were able to generate, compare and develop strategic options. This exercise demonstrated how we could use our strengths to capitalize on our opportunities and mitigate threats. We also gained an understanding of how our weaknesses could impact our

opportunities and how they could be taken advantage of our threats.

To accomplish the vision and mission of the CTCNS it became necessary to establish strategic priorities that will be our focus moving forward as they will have a direct impact on our three overarching objectives (as mentioned above).

The five top priorities determined by the working group:

1. Industry Leadership
2. Productivity
3. Quality
4. Marketing
5. Research and Development

Everything that has been outlined so far took approximately ten months to complete. It was then necessary for industry participants to take a break to manage their own business operations, including a harvest season. With the ground work completed a "Strategic Plan" for the CTCNS was written in late 2018.

Once the 2018 harvest/Christmas season was over it was urgent the working group get back on track, with the guidance of the now written strategic plan we would establish direction for the Christmas tree industry to best address the five priorities. With the groundwork completed, the strategic plan completed, and working teams established it is time to take the next step. At the first 2019 meeting members broke off into working teams, one for each of the five priorities identified.

Another key element that will help propel the Christmas tree and greenery industry is the development of the "SMART" Christmas tree seedling. This seedling is the result of a recently completed research project conducted through Dalhousie University Agriculture Campus Truro. This true Balsam Fir has the ability to regain



# Upcoming Events

**MAY 25 & 26 BIBLE HILL**

Tractor Safety Course

**MAY 29 KENTVILLE**

Forklift Awareness Course

**JUNE 6 & 7 BERWICK**

Pesticide Applicator Training

**JULY 4 BIBLE HILL**

SMART Annual General Meeting

**AUGUST 7 NAPPAN**

Forage Day

**OCTOBER 27, 28 & 29 NIAGRA FALLS**

Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference

**NSFA News & Views** is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the United, Strong & Caring Farm Organization representing the best interest of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Industry.

## 2019 EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:

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**News & Views** is provided free of charge to its members. We value comments and concerns from our members. Please direct them to Executive members or the Office Staff.

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## Building Tomorrow Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia

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markets lost to the fake tree and open new more distant markets, because of the trees ability to retain its needles for an extended period.

As Chair of Council's "Building Tomorrow" Committee I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Honorable Keith Colwell, his staff, the staff at CTCNS, and all of the individuals who have and will continue to work on the various aspects of developing the future for the Christmas tree industry here in beautiful Nova Scotia.

Richard Levy Chair  
"Building Tomorrow"



Shown above (L to R) CTCNS Executive Director, Angus Bonnyman; Building Tomorrow Chair, Richard Levy; Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Keith Colwell; CTCNS President, Mike Keddy; and Ethan DeLong